

North Coast Steelhead Advisory Group Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) has developed these Terms of Reference with the following objectives in mind to: 1) specify the functions and composition of the North Coast Steelhead Advisory Group (NCSAG); 2) define the team's roles and responsibilities; and; 3) gain the active commitment of all team members to help develop a plan to meet the objective of sustainable fisheries and conservation.

These Terms of Reference will remain in effect as long as the NCSAG is in place or until superseded. They may be modified if the need arises and at the discretion of the Department. This document will be distributed to all members prior to the first meeting, and it will be reviewed at meetings as needed.

The primary objectives of the described in the May 1 News Release:

1. Evaluate the existing steelhead regulations
2. Evaluate existing hatchery production programs
3. Evaluate the regulation proposals for 2016/17 received during the current regulation cycle
4. Recommend alternatives that promote sustainable fisheries and meet conservation goals.

The Department operates under mandates established in RCW 77.04.012. The Department also has a Statewide Steelhead Management Plan developed in 2008 that provides a framework of policies, strategies, and actions that present overarching guidelines for the management of steelhead in Washington State. Recommendations and alternatives developed by the NCSAG must be consistent with the Department mandate, Statewide Steelhead Management Plan, and other Department policies.

Structure

The NCSAG group is comprised of 13 members. Six members were appointed from the Steelhead Cutthroat Policy Advisory Group (SCPAG) and seven appointed from the public. The general function of the NCSAG is to advise the Department, evaluate regulations and hatchery programs, and develop recommendations, ultimately leading to a Department recommendation to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Recommendations by the NCSAG will be provided to the SCPAG for review, comment and recommendations. Recommendations will be communicated to the Director.

The Department is the decision maker for regulation and alternative recommendations to the Fish and Wildlife Commission. Members are expected to share their expertise and perspectives; actively participate in meetings; read meeting materials in advance of meetings; and write, review, and provide feedback as needed. The Department and NCSAG may also draw on the expertise of individuals outside the formal structure. Subcommittees or workgroups may be convened around specific tasks. These groups will report progress back to the broader NCSAG and help integrate their work into NCSAG products.

NCSAG Coordinator and Role

The Department has appointed a NCSAG coordinator, Steve Thiesfeld, whose general responsibilities will include: 1) leading and facilitating each meeting; 2) assigning projects (as necessary); 3) ensuring that all members of the team are participating as appropriate to ensure steady progress; 4) reviewing the evaluations and recommendations; and 5) overseeing the completion of responsibilities.

Team Meetings

We anticipate that the NCSAG or its subcommittees will meet every three or four weeks. During the initial meeting the Coordinator will meet with the members to discuss the process, review the Terms of Reference, discuss future meetings, and start discussions about the status and needs North Coast steelhead.

Prior to each meeting the coordinator will work with members to prepare or will themselves prepare materials. In most instances these materials will be sent in advance to the members. Members are not expected to initiate development of materials, but are welcome to do so with the agreement of the Coordinator. We understand that team members may not be able to attend every meeting, and ask that members provide comments on the meeting materials prior to meetings they cannot attend.

Recommendations and Conflict Resolution

Whenever possible, recommendations from the NCSAG will be made through a consensus approach. If the members cannot reach consensus, the Coordinator may initiate alternative processes to arrive at a team recommendation; however, this approach is not preferred and will be used judiciously. Dissenting positions will be recorded, maintained on file, and documented in the recovery plan. Through the proposed planning process and in accordance with the Terms of Reference, the Coordinator will work to ensure that the interests of all members are fairly represented and that different perspectives are respected.

Duration of Service & Recovery Plan Timeline

We will convene the NCSAG for the specific purpose of preparing evaluations and recommendations. It is our intent to have recommendations for the Fish and Wildlife Commission by September of 2015, and final alternatives and recommendations by June 30, 2016. Therefore, the duration of service for participants will be approximately 1 year. Although the NCSAG will be convened for this period, it should be noted that Department may disband, expand, or change the composition of the team.

Communications

Lines of communication between the NCSAG and Department are direct and will be conducted between the members and the Department Lead. It is the responsibility of the NCSAG Leader to facilitate open and constructive discussion of ideas and information. The Department will prepare meeting summaries of each meeting. When differences of opinion occur, the summaries will include both the majority and minority opinion(s).

Terms of Service

All members serve in an advisory capacity to the Department. The NCSAG is a forum in which to discuss opinions regarding measures necessary to promote sustainable fisheries and meet conservation goals. All team members must be committed to working together towards those goals.